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ABSTRACT

It is traditional among some peoples of the world to celebrate an individual's coming-of-age with ritual. Through these ceremonies, and the tests which sometimes accompany them, a society socializes its youth and transforms them inwardly by molding their moral and mental disposition. Without such ritualization there is a breakdown in the continuity of culture. Since schools do not fulfill this function in American society it is necessary for families and communities to provide ceremonies which will mark the passage of children into adulthood. For black males this means that their community and family must teach the Afro-centric social philosophy which is a part of their cultural past. Memories of this past are fading as black communities deteriorate. This a crucial time to begin incorporating traditional principles into the lives of black children. A process for doing this is the rite called Simba Wachanga. A network of organizations in the black community are practicing and promoting this ritual for black males. Simba Wachanga functions as a guidance system incorporating the following principles: (1) unity; (2) self-determination; (3) collective work and responsibility; (4) cooperative economics; (5) purpose; (6) creativity; and (7) faith. (VM)

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PASSAGE TO MANHOOD:
REARING THE MALE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILD

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Development Institute
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> What we need in the world today is not knowledge of these things so much as experience of these things.
>
> Laurens van der Post
> Patterns of Renewal

Adults are not born but made. The shaping of the adult we will become begins early in life. The desires of our nurturers are subtly communicated to us in the ways we are held, what we are fed, how and when we are consoled, why we are sung to or smiled at. That modling continues over the years as we are told what stories are worth our attention and what adventures are worth our energies. We are taught what to value and what to ignore. Eventually, we are ready to be admitted to the rights and responsibilities of full cultural membership. Only then do we become adults.

In some cultures, the final entrance into adulthood is marked, as it has been from time immemorial, by the coming-of-age ceremony. Like other major life change ceremonies which accompany birth, marriage, and death, the coming-of-age ceremony locates the individual at a new point within the surrounding community and indeed, within the universe as a whole. It is a critical moment of expansion, the entrance into a world of larger responsibilities, larger privileges, larger secrets, larger institutions, larger understandings. It amounts to a second birth; entry not into physical life, but into the higher life of culture and of the spirit. Accordingly, it encourages the society to display itself fully, giving immediacy to its myths and traditions and physical expression to its animating beliefs.

The post-industrial world, by contrast, holds ceremony suspect, viewing it as a kind of primitive witchery that deludes us into accepting beliefs that would not otherwise be found in the world of the

intellect. Further discrediting the validity of ceremony and ritual are the repeated explosions that have fragmented nearly all of the comfortable assumptions which are, of necessity, part of any act of ritual acknowledgment. Ceremony lives by continuity, not change; and so, the coming-of-age ceremony (rite of passage), in its pure form, has disappeared from all but the most traditional and isolated societies. This is, indeed, lamentable, especially if one believes that the foundering of contemporary youth--their extended identity crises and frantic searching for personal identity in the fires of intense experience--is a symptom of the loss of a discernible threshold over which one passes into accepted adulthood. The gateway is gone, leaving the younger generation to thrash through the underbrush on their own in the hope of finding reasonable passage.[1]

What are the traditional elements of coming-of-age? Common to all methods of achieving adulthood is separation from family as one takes leave of the smaller immediate world of experience in favor of an expanded realm of cultural images and mythological promise. In some traditional tribal societies, this separation was (and sometimes still is) both sudden and traumatic. When the time for initiation arrived, the men of the tribe swept in from the bush and kidnapped the young from their mothers. In a gentler way, the same function is served by mentorship. The young person becomes attached to an unrelated member of the older generation in order to learn a craft, a cultural role, a more capacious set of values.

Among traditional peoples, the transition often takes the form of a journey or quest. Frequently adolescents are literally thrust out into the world in a solitary wilderness retreat or a similar exposure to the vastness of nature. Their physical removal from the

close circle of family is then joined to a search for cosmic belonging. It is a time to experience the hidden dimension of things and to listen for the silent voices that might help guide one's way in the world.

In some Australian tribes, as the first phase of initiation, youths were sent far away--usually two at a time--on visits to other clans and/or relatives. The journey lasted a month or two, at the end of which time the initiate had accumulated many gifts and items that helped establish their imminent adulthood. Symbolically, at least, the individual was broken and remade in the image of the culture. Many times the youth was given a new name in recognition of his or her new adult identity. Sometimes the everyday name remained the same, but a sacred or spiritual name was added to acknowledge his or her expanded condition. In order to impress the sanctity of this newly conferred name on their initiates, elders of a certain tribe would hide in the trees near the site of the naming ceremony. As each new name was pronounced, they would echo it from the treetops, as though a chorus of ancestral spirits were in attendance. Typically, coming-of-age ceremonies culminate in the giving of a gift or token which serves as recognition of the individual's new estate. In warlike cultures, a young man was given arms or sent out with a war party. In a hunting culture, he was taken on a hunt and participated in a major kill. In agricultural societies, he was likely to be allowed to take part in the central religious rites for the first time.

Among the Kung, a hunting-gathering tribe of the Kalahari Desert, a young man was not allowed to marry until he had killed a large game animal, and thereby proved his ability to support a family. At the ceremony of the first kill, vertical cuts were made in the young man's chest, back, arms, and face. Charcoal, medicinal herbs, and fat from

the animal which had just been killed were rubbed into the cuts producing permanent scars. A young man who could not complete the qualifying feat, even if that failure were due to bad eyesight or some other handicap, was never permitted to marry.

In African societies, ceremonies symbolize a bond between temporal processes and archetypal patterns. They give form and meaning to human events. Typically, this is accomplished through a threefold ritual pattern consisting of rites of separation, transition, and reincorporation.

The specific object of rites of passage is to create fixed and meaningful transformations in the life cycle (birth, puberty, marriage, death), in the ecological and temporal cycle (planting, harvest, seasonal change, new year), and in the accession of individuals to high office. The important phase in these rites is the middle or liminal phase of transition.[2] In this phase, people are metaphysically and sociologically remade into human persons, children are made into adults, men and women are made into husbands and wives, deceased persons are made into revered ancestors, princes are made into kings. Seasonal transitions are also marked and celebrated in this way; thus, the old year is made into the new, and the season of drought is made into the season of rain.

This remaking of men and of time involves the symbolic destruction of the old and the creation of the new. It is a dual process of death and rebirth involving symbols of reversal, bisexuality, disguise, nakedness, death, humiliation, the earth, intoxication, and infantilism. These symbols of ritual liminality have both negative and positive connotations for they represent the paradoxical situation of the womb/tomb, the betwixt and between period when people and time are both abolished and renewed. At this critical period, people are neither

children nor adults, male nor female, human nor animal. They are momentary anomalies, stripped of their former being, ready to become something new. Similarly, the time between the seasons and the time between the years belongs neither to the old nor to the new, but to both. It is a time out of time, when the usual order of things is reversed and thrown into primordial chaos, ready to be reestablished and renewed in a new order of temporality.[3]

The most elaborate rites of passage usually involve the initiation of the young into adulthood. Through these rituals and tests a society not only socializes its young by outwardly moving them into new roles of social responsibility, it also transforms them inwardly by molding their moral and mental disposition towards the world. African societies generally regard this internal transformation as the primary purpose of initiation rituals.

Among the Bambara of Mali, the initiation of boys into manhood takes several years and involves six distinct stages, each of which has its own initiation group. From beginning to end, the goal of this series of passages is the complete social and metaphysical transformation of boys from children to adults and ultimately, from mortality to immortality.[4]

The Diola, who live in the Casamance region in southwest Senegal, celebrate manhood passage rites, known as Bakut, only at fifteen to thirty year intervals. After Bakut is announced by an elder playing a sacred drum and male relatives have shaved each initiate's head, villagers and guests form a circle around the initiates and dancing begins. Later, in a sacred grove several hundred yards from the village, they are circumcised. After the ritual and the circumcision, the initiates spend the next two months learning the responsibilities of adulthood.

That part of our rich African inheritance that is characterized by traditions of personal mastery and locus of control through the ritualization of social relationships, has been lost. But, in assessing our present predicament, it is only natural that we examine our African origins to determine what it is that we lost that should have been saved. Obviously, many worthy elements of our heritage have been lost, or stripped away, or simply allowed to wither.

One of the most important things that has been removed from the few effective artificial replacements (in contrast to technological development) is the ritualization of social relationships.[5] Customs, traditions, and rituals and ceremony, for instance, although sometimes punitive and in need of change or repair, are nevertheless, as veins and arteries to the body or the wiring of a radio or an electrical plant. Without the connectors, there will be a breakdown in the continuity of flow, a shortage will occur somewhere in the system. Many of us have neglected and even shunned these processes--to our peril. At the very time when functioning males are too often missing from households, when too many children do not have a daily model in their homes, indeed, sometimes do not know exactly what their fathers do for a living, or in fact, may not know their fathers at all, when many fathers are not available to their children except, at best, on a fractionalized basis, the benefits of custom, ceremony, faith, and ritual acculturation have been discarded and held in contempt for us as a people.[6]

Social scientists with a wide range of ideological and ethnic perspectives have concurred that

> . . . there is no evidence that people living in a secular urbanized world have less need of ritualized expression for their transitions from one status to another.[7]

Nathan and Julia Hare note in Bringing The Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage, that the lingering importance of graduation ceremonies at schools and colleges, weddings, and funerals, and the way that confirmations and bar mitzvahs signal the milestones and status changes in our lives reinforce and imprint both duty and propriety.

The nearest modern equivalent to ancient initiation rites is formal and institutionalized education. Both processes are compulsory. Both try to bend the unruly energies of youth to constructive social purposes. Both attempt to teach obedience, discipline, and the basics of proper behavior. Both express and communicate the central value of the sponsoring culture. Both reveal previously hidden knowledge. Both are challenging and exhausting. Both eventually result in new ways of seeing the world. Both certify the youth for participation in the larger society. The differences between the old and new are as follows.

-- The old rites were religious; the new rites are usually secular.
-- The old rites ran by sun and seasonal time (outdoor and active); the new rites operate by clock and calendar (usually sedentary and pursued behind closed doors).
-- The old rites centered on concrete experiences; the new rites rely heavily on words, numbers, and abstractions.
-- The old rites provided physical risks and danger; the new rites substitute organized sports, which combine moderate challenge and minimal risk.
-- The old rites were dramatic, intense, forceful, and fast; the new rites are slow, strung out, and often vague about ultimate destination.
-- The old rites engendered awe; the new rites commonly produce detachment and boredom.

-- The old rites typically gave a sense of vital participation in the historical unfolding of the culture as a whole; the new rites are often only created holding areas where youths are held in isolation from the larger cultural reality rather than allowed to experience it.

-- The old rites resulted in an immediate and unmistakable status change; the new rites provide no such direct deliverance into adult roles and status.

-- The old rites were over at a determined place and at a determined time, witnessed by the community as a whole; the new rites can go on indefinitely and be severed (dropping out and being pushed out), perhaps never resulting in general community recognition.

-- The old rites were in the hands of caring and concerned adults who had the interests of the youths at heart; the new rites are frequently monitored by uncaring employees whose purpose for being involved is related to his or her own financial condition (a shift in locus of control from the family to the state).

Given that schools do not satisfactorily fulfill the cognitive, physical, psychological/emotional, affective, and cultural requirements of a true rite of passage, it is necessary for families and communities to provide ceremonies to clarify and dramatize their children's passage to adulthood.

Initiation ceremonies, common in many societies, mark public recognition of the change from one status to another, especially from adolescence to adulthood. Female and male initiation ceremonies often separate individuals from the rest of the society. These cultural dramas are seen as effective means of instructing young people

in cultural values. In order to develop the male prototype who can be expected to function as provider, mate, and protector (warrior), it is necessary to develop and institutionalize processes for successful transition from boyhood to manhood. The ideal system/process for the development and passage of African-American boys into manhood would involve the creation of our own institutions and environments to facilitate the process.

A review of such institutions reflect several factors that contributed to their success and survival. For purposes of the survey, success was defined as having a positive impact on youth as related to their achievement, attitude and behavior. The elements which appear to be the major determinants of the success of the surveyed institutions and youth organizations were staff qualifications, ideology, and degree of self-sufficiency.[8] Generally, the ideology of these successful groups was based on an Afro-Centric perspective. The high sense of self/group identity, achievement, and adjustment of students and program participants were a result of the Afro-Centric focus of the programs. The knowledge, preparedness, cultural groundness and expectations of adult facilitators were also significant. Being primarily dependent upon public and/or private funds was both inhibiting and colonialistic. The lesson to be learned is that the one who controls the purse strings eventually determines what can or cannot be done.

In summary, operation of these organizations as businesses with qualified staff from an Afro-Centric perspective was important for institutional integrity. Some of the elements of the Afro-Centric perspective are:

-- It operates from an extended family base.

-- It expresses the uniqueness of the African-American experience.

-- It does not romanticize the past, but corrects and reinforces it in order to provide identity, purpose, and direction.

-- It provides a cultural frame-of-reference grounded in the spirituality and traditions which are necessary to function as healthy and whole human beings.

-- The principles related to the Afro-Centric perspective (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, co-operative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith) facilitate the physical, mental and spiritual development necessary for survival and success.

As we approach the twenty-first century, it is proper time to make sense of where we have been and discover what our young people see as the way and the direction in which they will go. An Afro-Centric social philosophy is needed to help guide the African-American community into the twenty-first century. Certainly we have a rich legacy from the past to guide us in accomplishing that mission. Naturally, our vision must be based broadly enough to allow factional, class, religious, economic, and other categorical lines to be bridged. African-Americans do not belong to a monolithic community, but to a community with a common ethnic origin and cultural past, but memories of that past are fading.

Those origins and those past common experiences should help transform the values we share, and collectively we can alter the course of the lives of our children. But, until we recognize that there must be an even more basic consideration than values, we will flounder. That consideration is that there are fundamental principles that must provide the basis for our values or belief system as we move along.

The editor of Webster's New World Dictionary was quoted in the New York Times as follows:

> Principles, being theological in origin, are fixed, invariable, absolute, eternal. Values, being in a sense (cultural), scientific, are non-theological and therefore subject to change and alteration as the demands and needs of a (community) change.

In other words, principles are essential elements for our beliefs and conduct. Values, on the other hand, can only be defined within the cultural context of the times, are relative, and represent what one believes for oneself in relation to others at any given time and place. Principles are important because without them, practice would be incorrect and suffer, and possibilities will be limited.

We are at a crucial stage of development. Most of our communities are deteriorating and family life is similarly afflected. It is crucial that we develop a formal program for change, because our lives and our children's lives are at stake. The foundation for the development of a rites of passage process must be predicated on universally agreed upon principles, i.e., categories of commitment and priorities which define human possibilities and value systems. It is important to incorporate the right principles, because without principles, practice will suffer and possibilities for change will be limited.

In October, 1984, a rites of passage process entitled Simba Wachanga was implemented at The East End Neighborhood House in Cleveland, Ohio. Simba Wachange is Kiswahili for young lions. The history of Simba as a youth organization of males is traceable to Dr. Ron Karenga and the U.S. (United Simba) Organization of Watts, California. Dr. Karenga captured the idea from Patrice Lumumba whose soldiers in Zaire were called Simba. The group flourished in the late sixties through early seventies under The Congress of African People. Only two programs in Detroit and St. Louis survived The "Second Reconstruction."

In July, 1987, the First Annual Simba Wachanga Sharing and Training Conference was sponsored by Simba Na Malaika Wachanga--St. Louis. Twelve states were represented at the first conference. Organizations represented were a combination of Simba Na Malaika programs and groups interested in how to start a Simba Wachanga program.

The second Annual Simba Wachanga Na Malaika Conference will be held in Cleveland, Ohio the second weekend in July, 1988. Simba Wachanga presently exist as a network of organizations whose focus is on the development of the African-American male. The focus among the older Simba Wachanga programs have been expanded to include a separate component for womanhood development--Malaika. All the Simba Wachanga programs are unique relative to age-grouping, funding, curriculum, passage, structure/procedures and sponsors; no standardized process exists. However, all programs are similar relative to providing the installation of values from an Afro-Centric frame-of-reference that fosters cultural, spiritual, social and educational development. Simba Wachanga, as will be presented, is based on the Cleveland, Ohio conceptual model for the development of young males. The model will be presented not as THE plan, but as A plan for the development of whole and healthy men. What follows is that plan!

Simba Wachanga Cleveland is based on the African dictum "Man know yourself: and the principle of "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."

Simba Wachanga functions as a guidance system through which African-America speaks to its young males telling them--

Who they are!

Where they should be going!

What they need to do to get there!

What they must have when they arrive!

The foundation of The Simba Rites of Passage Program is predicated on the Nguzo Saba or Seven Principles. The premise of the Nguzo Saba is based on Dr. Ron Karenga's Kawaida Theory which maintains, "That if the key crisis in Black life is the cultural crisis, i.e., a crisis in views and values, then social organization or rather reorganization must start with a new value system."[9] The Nguzo Saba are the moral minimum value system Black people need in order to rescue and reconstruct their history and humanity, indeed their daily lives, in their own image and interests.

NGUZO SABA
(Seven Principles of Simba Wachanga)

1. Umoja (unity) is commitment to the principle and practice of togetherness and collective action on crucial levels, i.e., building and maintaining unity in the family, community, nation, and race. Unity is the first and elemental principle because without unity our possibilities as a people are few and fragile, if they exist at all.
2. Kujichagulia (self determination) is commitment to the principle and practice of defining, defending, and developing ourselves instead of being defined, defended, and developed by others. It demands that we build our own lives in our own image and interests and construct, through our own efforts, institutions to house our aspirations.
3. Ujima (collective work and responsibility) is commitment to active and informed togetherness on matters of common interests. It is also recognition and respect of the fact that without collective work and struggle, progress is impossible and liberation unthinkable.

4. Ujamaa (cooperative economics) is commitment to the principle and practice of shared wealth and resources. It grows out of the fundamental African communal concept that the social wealth belongs to the masses of people who created it and that no one should have such an unequal amount of wealth that it gives him/her the capacity to impose unequal, exploitative, and oppressive relations on others.

5. Nia (purpose) is commitment to the collective vocation of building, defending, and developing our national community in order to regain our historical initiative and greatness as a people. At the core of this principle is the assumption and contention that the highest form of personal purpose is, in the final analysis, social purpose, i.e., personal purpose that translates into a vocation and commitment which involves and benefits the masses of Black people.

6. Kuumba (creativity) is commitment to the principle and practice of building rather than destroying, or positive proactive construction rather than negative reactive destruction. Inherent in this principle is commitment to leave our national community stronger, more beautiful, and more effective in its capacity to define, defend, and develop its interests than when we inherited it.

7. Imani (faith) is commitment to ourselves as persons and a people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. Moreover, it is belief in and commitment to our brothers and sisters, to their defense and development, and to the fullness of our collective future. Inherent in the principle of Imani is the call for a humanistic faith, an earth-oriented, earth-based, people-centered faith in the tradition of the best of African philosophies and

values.

The environment for The Simba Wachanga Process must be socially supportive and transcend nuclear, extended, and single family structures. Such family forms in contemporary America are incapable of developing male children.

In The Black Adolescent, Thomas Gordon says that in African cultures, community is pre-eminent and membership is the foundation for existence. The Western mode or perspective--with its awesome implications for mental illness and adolescent stress--teaches us a reality of individual aspiration, material accumulation, technological complexity, frantic upward mobility, and the rhetoric of personal liberty. In the West, the Euro-American really expects to produce healthy, happy children only within the nuclear family. This assumption is preposterous. The nuclear family cannot and never will provide complete nurturing nor will it ever possess the communicative and recuperative powers to meet the full needs of male children.

The nuclear and single family, organized for mobility, provides its children with things and events and "accelerating experiences," but relatively little community or "connectedness." We are child focused in what and how much we give to our children, but we are generally poor architects in building networks for their wider connection and support. Television and public day care are the West's rejoinder to African community and connection.[10] The Joint Committee on Mental Health of Children made special note of this when it reported that

> This nation which looks to the family to nurture its young, gives no real help with child rearing until a child is badly disturbed or disruptive to the community. The discontent, apathy, and violence today are a warning that

society has not assumed its responsibility to ensure an environment which will provide optimum care for its children. The family cannot be allowed to withstand, alone, the enormous pressures of an increasingly technological world. Within the community, some mechanisms must be created which will assume the responsibility for ensuring the necessary supports for the child and family.[11]

Simba Wachanga is predicated on an African-American communal network. The communal network functions as an alternative and developmental support system for male children. It is predicated on adults assuming responsibilities for the development of young males and their families. Assuming such responsibilities is not based on kinship or blood. The communal network is horizontal in nature; and it provides a safety net to insure the development of all our children. Simba Wachanga as a transition and guidance program incorporates a ritualizing process to accomplish prescribed objectives. As a ritualizing process, Simba Wachanga has the following goals:

-- Give definite initial directions.
-- Allow emotional expression and promote satisfaction at each step.
-- Teach the importance of consideration for other family members.
-- Provide appropriate recognition for progress vis-a-vis challenges and initiatives.
-- Recognize African extension from the past.
-- Make appropriate and African custom references through research.
-- Develop transferable skills to generate and sustain an economy.
-- Establish future behavior expectations.

The Simba Wachanga process establishes the following:

-- An environment of care, concern, and communication;

-- Realistic and flexible limits that relate to physical, emotional, mental, social, moral, and spiritual development;

-- An environment which is conducive to appropriate learning and which involves:

** Telling a participant what is expected

** Explaining why it is expected

** Defining the consequences if it is not done

** Showing a participant how to do what is expected

** Sharing the task in some instances with the participant

** Watching the participant perform the task

** Evaluating the results

** Rewarding positively the appropriate response

-- The freedom for participants to learn to make appropriate choices through exercises which provide;

** Problem solving and decision making opportunities and constructive criticism

** Experiences in which participants have to accept and shoulder the consequences of their own behavioral choices.

The process for facilitating the aforementioned needs must be kept in relative balance--neither too much nor too little of anything. Each will expand or contract in relation to the level of responsibility, ability, and maturity of the youth.

The operational objectives of Simba Wachanga are as follows:

-- Legitimization of beingness as a male

Identity, connection, validation

-- Provision of a family code

Being able to interpret, manage, and respond to both known and undefined situations

-- Elasticity of boundaries

Developing rules of conduct

-- Mediation of concrete conditions

Problem-solving and Decision-making

The Simba Wachanga involves a minimum of one year of participation. Levels of participation vis-a-vis skills accomplishment corresponds to the African-American National Flag. (The African-American National Flag was provided by The Honorable Marcus Garvey.) The progression from the lowest level--red to the highest level--black is symbolic of the colors of the flag--red, green, and black.

Simba Wachanga, as a rites of passage process involves levels of proficiency that relate to the following curriculum and skill areas:

History and Culture

Life Skills

Manhood Training

Physical Fitness and Self Defense

Survival and Wilderness Training

Health Maintenance and Hygiene

Nutrition and Food Preparation

Life Management and Values Clarification

Community Organizing and Political Awareness

Educational Reinforcement

Financial Management and Entrepreneurial Skills

Spiritual Enrichment

Universe is based on moral principles

(Not to conflict with religious preference)

These curriculum areas relate directly to fulfilling the prerequisites for black male functionability and preparing participants for black manhood as defined in Being a Black Male. Prerequisites for Black male functionability are as follows:

-- Cognitive Domain

** the ability to conceptualize, analyze, synthesize, infer, discriminate, and generalize

-- Physical Domain

** maximal physical abilities

** knowledge of food and nutrition, exercise, sexuality, substance abuse, stress, and preventive disease living vs curative disease living

-- Psychological/Emotional Domain

** a strong self-concept, emotional grounding, and trust

** the capacity for exploration and functional and non-destructive defensive mechanisms

** an aversion to mentacidal behaviors

-- Affective Domain

** an exposure to the range of human emotions and experiences including anger, fear, love, warmth, sensitivity, caring, loss, hurt, pain, compassion, sharing, closeness, distance, support, encouragement, selfishness, and emotional construction and reconstruction

-- Territorial Domain

** self-defense skills and discipline

-- Cultural Domain

** knowledge and understanding of

-- African and African-American history

-- Black value system

-- family orientation, roles, responsibility and accountability, work ethic, and child rearing

-- Spiritual Domain

** an awareness of and/or experience of

trol, oppression, and the negation of life

-- accepting the continuous challenge of a new battle on a terrain where the most important weapons, perhaps, are a belief in one's own humanity and a willingness to pay any price to beat the odds

Specific activities that youth participants should complete during level or year one are as follows:

The Log

A record should be kept by the boy and periodically checked by the parent(s), elders, instructors and Big Brothers (should include pictures, clippings, notations, articles and other materials pertaining to his transition.)

An understanding of immediate and extended family

A full list is made of relationships and whereabouts of each relative, beginning with immediate family. This project begins with immediate family and goes back as far as possible.

Recognition of skill accomplishments and progression from level to level is crucial and must be acknowledge through certification, badges, ceremony, etc.

The procedure for the ceremony acknowledging progression or passage should parallel the ritual associated with a wedding, Kwanzaa, funeral, cotillion, fraternal pledging, etc. Symbols incorporated in the ceremony are as follows:

-- seven candles (one black, three red, three green--black in center with three red on the left and the three green on the right)

-- candle holder (individual or connected)

-- unity cup (to honor ancestors living and dead)

-- straw mat (foundation for placing other symbols)

-- cornstalk (to be burned symbolizing death of the boy or attain-

-- the inseparability of the living and dead

-- quietness and meditation

-- a universal force

-- living in harmony with rather than in opposition to the natural laws of the universe

-- prayer, worship, and a deep respect for ancestors

Being a Black man is defined as:

-- having the ability to assess objective reality in terms of the interests and welfare of Black people on personal, group, and communal levels

-- having the ability to transcend the traps of Euro-Centric pathology and not fall victim to the destructive forces inherent therein

-- placing supreme value on life and not participating in activities or at least drastically minimizing participation in activities which would negate life

-- holding supreme the value of the Black family and according to it the support, attention, protection, and leadership necessary to keep it a viable and strong institution

-- having the capacity to transcend restricted and devalued role sets and not looking to or depending upon a hostile culture to provide affirmation of self-worth

-- viewing Black women as subjects and not objects (possessions) who are fully capable of contributing equally to the struggles for Black reassertion at every level

-- maximally developing whatever talents, potentials, and capabilities one possesses in the interest of self, group, and communal advancement and supporting and facilitating the same achievements in others

-- viewing one's own children and those of others as the carriers of

generational truths and cultural sovereignty and as the precious and irreplaceable gifts they are; therefore, according them all the rights, discipline, privileges, protection, guidance, support, nurturance, encouragement, and love required for their full, complete and humanistic development

-- valuing all work and demeaning non; promoting, encouraging, and facilitating production; and cultivating an appreciation of the unique contributions each person can make, giving primacy to the ethic within one's own family

-- leading by example not rhetoric; being resilient in the face of adversity, not passive, thinking before acting; being fluid and flexible not stagnant and fixated; and being open and exploratory not confined and dogmatic

-- developing in oneself the capacity to express the full range of human experiences and emotions

This, of necessity, will dictate an acceptance of the feminine in oneself, though worn on the inside, without fear or gender confusion. Thus, for example, compassion need not conflict with rugged determination, nor sensitivity with strength, nor courage with rational retreat, but rather each complements the other. The acceptance of the androgynous nature of human beings is critical.

-- not allowing oneself to get bogged down in behaviors and attitudes which are destructive to mutually beneficial and supportive male-female relationships like who makes how much; whose decision; whose role; whose responsibility; whose job; whose career; whose time to do this or that or the other, etc.

Mutuality and support not competition-conflict and the win-lose syndrome are important

-- viewing power as an instrument for human advancement and not con-

ment of a skill)

-- medallion (engraved with the continent of Africa, outline of United States inside; Simba printed across, in black, red, green--symbolizing African-American people, continuing struggle and Africa)

-- banner (incorporating Seven Principles)

-- African art or picture of African-American hero

Development of the script and detailed organization of the ceremony will be the responsibility of The Elders of the program.

Induction, progression, passage and recognition of Simbas in the Cleveland program is incorporated as part of The Kwanzaa Celebration December 26 through January 1st. Simba is a practical extension of the principles and theory of Kwanzaa--it reflects a bridging of theory and practice.

Simba Wachanga, Cleveland focuses on the twelve to fourteen year old male. The ages from nine to twelve are important in the emotional and psychological development of the male child, because the basic personality does not change much from that point on. Yet, much personality development does take place during this period and in adolescence.[12] The importance of this period also relates to the third and fourth grades syndrome identified by Harry Morgan and Jawanza Kunjufu, both of whom document the poor transition boys make between the primary and intermediate divisions in public schools. Achievement rates of African-American boys begin a downward spiral during this period which continues through their academic lives.[13] Providing services to younger and older youth in a school or neighborhood based program is possible but challenging. The Simba Wachanga concept can be utilized in a primary and pre-school setting. Youth thirteen through eighteen years of age can also be accomodated. The Cleveland program ac-

comodates youth from the ages of nine through fourteen years. Unless you have the resources and structured activities paralleling a school setting, it is difficult to accomodate a broad age-grouping.

Simba Wachanga is a full year program that parallels the school year with a minimum of four hours per week of activities. During the summer, special activities and field trips are scheduled. An inter-disciplinary and thermatic approach is used. Activities are no longer than one hour. Staffing of Simba Wachanga includes a core group and resource people who assume the roles of instructors and Big Brothers. The core group or Council of Elders were selected from the sponsoring organization. They are positive male role models who have the necessary skills to function in various roles (instructors,Big Brothers, etc.); and also have a sense of their African identity or a willingness to learn and teach from an Afro-Centric perspective. An orientation is provided for elders and resources. The orientation includes project rationale/philosophy, goals, objectives, methodology, roles, responsibilities and expectations. The most challenging task related to implementing a Simba project is identifying a sponsoring organization and the recruitment of a Council of Elders who have the time, skills, commitment, interest, creativity, patience and capacities to care, share and bear. A coordinator or chief should be selected from The Council of Elders.

The sponsor of Simba Wachanga in Cleveland is a neighborhood center; however, other sponsors of Simba Wachanga programs could be churches, Greeks, Masons, professional organizations, and/or neighborhood/voluntary associations. The Simba process can be adapted and used in school settings, scouting, team sports, boys clubs, group homes, etc. Creativity and flexibility in utilizing the model/process is urged! What is crucial in implementing a Simba Wachanga Rites of

Passage program or activity is having a practical understanding of Afro-Centricity. To insure that all elders and resources have such an understanding, they should be required to read and discuss the following books:

--Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change by Molefi Kete Asante

--Miseducation of The Negro by Carter G. Woodson

--Destruction of a Black Civilization by Chancellor Williams

--Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles by Janice Hale

--Countering The Conspirace to Destroy Black Boys, Volumes I and II by Jawanza Kunjufu

--Facing Mt. Kenya by Jomo Kenyetta

--Harvesting New Generations: The Positive Development of Black Youth by Useni Eugene Perkins

--Bring The Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage by Nathan and Julia Hare

--Transformation: A Rites of Passage Manual for African American Girls by Mafori Moore, Gwen Akua Gilyard, Karen McCreary, Nsenga Warfield-Coppock

It is necessary for all core elders of Simba to understand Afrocentricity, but it is not mandatory all resources, in the beginning, be experts on Afrocentricity.

Parental involvement with Simba Wachanga Program is important. The program is not intended as a substitute for the parent(s) and family. Parent(s) and youth responsibilities and expectations are reflected in a parental and participant agreement that is reviewed, discussed and signed by parent(s) and participant(s). Role definitions vis-a-vis responsibilities and expectations are crucial for active participation. Understanding and reinforcement of the process by the parent(s) is crucial.

In conclusion, the process that has been described provides a socio-cultural frame-of-reference for the implementation of a transi-

tional process to adulthood. The process provides formal recognition to establish the social status, social roles, and social responsibilities of African-American males as men. The Simba Wachanga Rites of Passage process is an opportunity to develop and nurture that much needed generation of African-American male youth as future providers, mates and protectors (warriors). Two generations (1960 and 1970) have succumbed to twentieth century Rome; a third generation (1980) is on the edge and will be lost if we do not act in haste. We cannot afford to lose another generation, such a loss will guarantee our demise as a people.

The road ahead will not be easy; the challenge will be identifying, creating and developing individuals and organizations to function as sponsors, supporters and nurturers. The selection and training of such a cadre is key to the success or failure of the process.

Our future as a people is dependent upon the success and replication of The Simba Wachanga Process. Simba Wachanga ideals must become the norm for the development of African-American boys into men.

Goree Island, exists; an international landmark and movement to The Holocaust of all displaced descendants of Africa throughout the world. Our challenge as African-American adults is to never allow our children to forget our past--African and American; and to maintain as our goal using Simba Wachanga ideals and objectives for developing whole and powerful, twenty-first century African-American men.

I am the lion cub
who will grow to be a lion.
I am Simba Wachanga.

I will strive always to live
worthy of our African heritage,
for I, too, am a son of Africa.

I am the lion cub.
I am Simba Wachanga.
Today, I stand facing the
mighty threshold of tomorrow's
manhood.

On this initiation day,
I began the Rite of Passage.

I pledge to honor my Creator,
To be true to the Code of Simba Wachanga,
To prepare myself for the privileges
and responsibilities of the lion, and
to serve the best interests of our people.

I am the lion cub.
I am Simba Wachanga.

Mwatabu Okantah, 1986

NOTES

1. Tony Jones, "Growing Up Modern," Creative Living: The Magazine of Life, Summer 1984, p. 2.
2. See Victor Turner's important discussions of rites of passage and of liminality in "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," in The Forest of Symbols, and in "Liminality and Communitas," in The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969).
3. Benjamin C. Ray, African Religions: Symbols, Ritual, and Community (Ingleside, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 91.
4. Dominique Zahan, Societe d'Initiation Bambara (Paris: Mouton, 1960), pp. 280-371.
5. Daryll Forde, Meyer Fortes, Victor W. Turner, Max Gluckman (eds.), Les Rites de Passages: Essays on The Ritual of Social Relations (Manchester, England: University of Manchester Press, 1966), p.2.
6. Nathan Hare and Julia Hare, Bringing The Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage (San Francisco: The Black Think Tank, 1985), p. 21.
7. Yehudi A. Cohen, "Ceremonies in The Second Stage of Puberty," in Childhood To Adolescence: Legal Systems and Incest Taboos (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1964).
8. Margaret A. Bowers, "The Educational Institution: An Exploration and Identification of Selected Factors That Relate To Their Survival: (unpublished dissertation, Atlanta University, July 1984), pp. 152-161; Paul Hill, Jr., Report to The National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise in Cleveland, Ohio, "Phase I Report," May 1985, pp. 1-7.
9. Maulana Karenga, Kawaida Theory (Inglewood, CA: Kawaida Publications, 1980), p. 44; Kwanzaa: Origin, Concepts Practice

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10. Thomas Gordan, "The Black Adolescent," in Gary Lawrence, ed., Mental Health (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1978), pp. 120, 122-123.
11. Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, Report of the Commission, Crisis in Child Mental Health (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 2.
12. James Comer and Alvin Poussaint, Black Child Care (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 222.
13. Harry Morgan, "How Schools Fail Black Children," Social Policy, Jan.-Feb., 1980, pp. 49-54.